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MABEL'S CHRISTMAS TREE. (Page 65.)



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AMMY STONE'S RED APPLES,

And Other Stories.

By MRS. M. M. B. GOODWIN.



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Sammy Stone's Red Apples.



IN the Widow Stone's orchard stood a large apple-tree, which was loaded, very full, with bright-red apples.

These apples, little Sammy Stone claimed as his individual property, and so

it came to pass, that in speaking of them,

(5)

all the family called them "Sammy's red apples."

When Sammy was but two years old, he used to watch his sister Mollie as she took her little "work-pocket"—that was what they were called, in those days, the little silk, or calico bags, drawn together with a string at the top, and used by old ladies to carry their knitting work, and by children instead of a dinner basket—well, as I was saying, Sammy watched his sister as she started for school, and when she was entirely out of sight, he would run to his mother and say:

"Mamma, *div* Sammy dinner in *wort pottet*—Sammy *do* to 'kool!" And so his mother would fix a piece of bread and butter, and as he insisted upon having it

in a "*wort pottet*," she made one on purpose, and he would gravely put his fat arm through the string, as he had seen Mollie do, and then, going away by himself into the garden, or down the lane, he would eat his lunch, and return to the house, entirely satisfied that he had been to school.

Sammy was not quite four years old when he began to go to school in good earnest. He had donned his first suit of boy's clothes, and very gravely informed the family that he was a "*'ittle man*," and not a "*dirl*" any more; and a funny "*'ittle man*" he was, sure enough, so fat and round that he looked like a black worsted ball, set on small boots, with a cap on.

Did you ever go to school in a red school-house, and did you carry a pocket full of red apples? This was what Sammy Stone did, and for the first day he had all he could do in looking around and watching the rest of the children, and learning to keep quiet. The teacher gave him a low seat in front, but every little while he would get up, very deliberately, and march, with his hands in his pockets, up to the back seat where Mollie was sitting, and the teacher had to go and make him march back again ; all of which, you may be sure, afforded infinite amusement to the scholars.

At length the teacher called him up to learn his letters. In those days, charts were an unheard-of thing ; the scholar

was obliged to learn from the spelling-book, or primer; and the primer from which Sammy was expected to learn his letters had been sadly stained and defaced by some urchin, who had attempted to color the various pictures with the juice of the poke-berry.

"What's that," said the teacher, pointing to the letter A.

"We's *dot* a white pig!" said Sammy, looking up in her face, with such earnest eyes, that she could not help smiling, though she knew that, for the sake of discipline, she ought to keep sober.

"Yes, Sammy, I'll hear about the white pig by and by, but it's the letter A we want to talk about now. Look on the book, and tell me what the let-

ter A stands for—see the picture, what is it?”

“*Wed* apple,” cried Sammy, hopping up and down, and laughing; “I’s *dot* lots of *wed* apples, ’aint I, Mollie?” he cried out in his loudest tones.

Mollie blushed, and shook her head for him to be quiet, but he did not understand it thus, and was very indignant at what he thought her denial of his statement.

Finally the teacher quieted him, and, pointing to the letter B, asked if he knew what it was.

“Yes,” said Master Sammy, with the utmost importance, “Him is a ox-yoke.”

This was too much for the gravity of the school, and there was a general burst of laughter, very much to Sammy’s sur-

prise, and, it must be confessed, to his indignation also.

After quiet had been restored, Miss Jones made another effort to teach him the alphabet. Pointing to the letter O, she told him what it was, and asked him to repeat it after her, but he resolutely shook his head, saying:

“That *be* a wheel, it goes buzz-z-z—Mamma make it go”—and, imitating the noise of a spinning-wheel, which he had often watched his mother using, he again set the school to laughing, and the teacher concluded to let him take his seat.

Among the scholars that attended school in the old red school-house was one Eli Ross, a large boy, who was a perfect torment to all the younger children, especially

the girls. He would snatch their bonnets and their books, and fling them over high fences, or into the dusty road; put toads in their dinner baskets and work-pockets; caterpillars upon their necks, and angle-worms in the water-pail.

One day, it seemed as though Eli was more than usually mischievous and impudent, and his pranks getting beyond all bounds, the teacher called him to the floor for punishment.

Sammy, who had never seen a person whipped, watched the preparations with wide-open mouth and eyes, but when the blows descended he cried as hard as Eli himself.

No sooner had the teacher sent Eli to his seat, than Sammy, getting up and

marching straight across the room, stopped in front of his desk and stood looking at him intently for a full minute, without uttering a word, then pulling a red apple from his pocket he thrust it into his hand, saying:

“You’s sorry ; you may have Sammy’s *wed* apple ;” and rubbing his fat fists into his tearful eyes, he returned to his seat.

Eli looked first at the apple and then at Sammy, in perfect bewilderment. It was the first act or word of sympathy which he could ever remember having received, and it took him completely by surprise.

Taken from the poor-house, by Dan Long, the shoemaker, a hard-hearted and intemperate man, poor Eli had endured

all the sufferings incident to the life of a bound-boy. Driven, abused, overworked, illy-clad, and half-starved, he had grown up sullen, morose, and ill-tempered, and he had acquired, as he had fully earned, the reputation of being the worst boy in the neighborhood.

He was feared by his school-mates, and disliked by his teachers, and almost hated by Dan Long and his wife, who had taken him for the purpose of making him a drudge.

People took it for granted that he was totally depraved, and never made an effort to find the few grains of good which, under all the badness, still lay in the depths of his heart.

Eli did not eat the apple that Sammy

gave him, but quietly put it in his pocket, while his eyes constantly sought Sammy's face, where the traces of tears still lingered. The afternoon passed away without any further disturbance. Never before had Eli behaved so well, or given so little trouble in the same length of time. His strange looks at Sammy set the teacher to wondering whether kindness might not have more weight with the boy than so much corporal punishment, and she resolved to test the matter.

After school was dismissed, Eli waited at the door until Sammy came out, when, catching the child up, he placed him astride his shoulders, and started off. Mollie gave a scream, at first, fearing that her brother would get hurt; but Sammy was in great

glee, and clasping his arms tightly around Eli's neck, enjoyed his ride famously ; and the faster Eli ran, the louder laughed the fearless little fellow, until he was set down at his own gate.

Mrs. Stone was in the yard, and when she thanked Eli for bringing home her boy, he seemed utterly bewildered at her words of commendation, and turned away with new and strange feelings struggling in his heart.

As he neared his own home he heard sounds of commotion, which convinced him that the shoemaker and his wife were having a family quarrel, and, well knowing, from past experience, that they would leave off abusing each other and turn the vials of wrath upon his head, he resolved

to keep out of the way until the tempest was past. Turning back, he went down the street toward the river bridge, where a few scattered houses, of the very poorest quality, sheltered such people as could not afford more comfortable dwellings.

As he walked quietly along, perplexed at the unwonted emotions which the events of the day had called into being, the dwellers in these hovels stared at him in perfect amazement. He wasn't flinging stones at the pigs, chasing the cats or children, nor tying tin-cups to the tails of luckless dogs. What did it mean? One woman, more bold than the rest, ventured to ask if any body was "dead" at his house, thinking that nothing but the death of the shoemaker, or his wife, could account

for such quiet behavior in the hitherto reckless boy.

The children of the neighborhood, when they saw him coming, had dodged round corners and behind doors, and now, as he passed by without any demonstrations of attack, they emerged from their hiding-places and stared after him in mute surprise, with dilated eyes and open mouths. One little girl, a helpless cripple, who could not get out of his way, and who had often been the subject of his taunts and jeers, turned pale, as he paused beside the rough-wheeled cart wherein she lay. For a full minute Eli stood looking down upon her, then taking the red apple from his pocket he placed it in her hand, and turning away, without a word, was out of sight

before Alice had recovered from her astonishment.

Did you ever do an unselfish act, dear little reader? If you never have, go at once and try what the effect will be upon your own heart, and then you will understand what Eli's feelings were as he retraced his steps toward home.

When he reached the shoemaker's he found the supper of mush and molasses upon the table, and, with a growl, the man bade him "come along," and the woman handed him a plate, upon which the molasses bore a very slight proportion to the mush. Eli hated mush and molasses, and Mr. Long and his wife both knew it; and when he took the plate and eat its contents without a word of com-

ment, they gazed at him with looks expressive of unbounded astonishment.

Eli was, in fact, so busy with the thoughts which the day's experience had called forth, that he took little heed of the supper; generally he was so hungry that he found it hard to get sufficient food to satisfy the cravings of nature; but to-night every other feeling was swallowed up in the newly-awakened emotions of gratitude and self-sacrifice.

Alice, to whom Eli had given the apple, had been a cripple since her birth, and she was, at times, a great sufferer; but, in spite of this, her mother had to leave her alone while she went out washing day after day to procure the means wherewith to pay for rent, food, and clothing. Often

they suffered for the very necessities of life, while its luxuries were, to them, unknown. Knowing this, you can, perhaps, understand that, to Alice, the gift of an apple was a matter of great moment, and so she kept it and showed it to her mother, with many words of surprised rejoicing.

To a child whose life had been so warped as had Eli's, reformation is not an easy matter, nor does it take place in a moment; so you will not be surprised to learn that by the next morning the old evil spirit seemed to have returned with tenfold violence, and he was even more mischievous than usual. The teacher, seeing this, feared she should have to fall back upon the birchen rod, but, deter-


mined to give her new resolutions a fair trial, she called him to the desk, and, keeping him while the children had recess, she endeavored to awaken his better feelings, and closed her advice by saying that she believed if he would endeavor to overcome his recklessness he might become one of the best boys and finest scholars in the school.

“Well, what if I did?” said Eli, “there’s nobody to care!” and bitter tears ran down his cheeks.

Before the teacher could reply, Sammy, who, unnoticed, had entered the room, came to Eli’s side, and catching hold of his hand, said, with quivering lips, “Boy, what you *tyin* for; I *docs* love you, big as a bushel!” Sammy evidently considered

that amount of love sufficient to satisfy any reasonable person, and he couldn't quite understand why Eli cried harder than before.

The teacher laid her hand on the boy's bowed head, and, in low, earnest tones, assured him that Sammy was not the only one who would love him a "bushel" if he would but give them a chance. "Remember, Eli," she added, "that people make friends or enemies by their own conduct. Gold can not buy *true* friends, nor can poverty drive them away."



That night, when school was out, Sammy was ready for another ride, and no king ever felt prouder, seated upon a war-charger, than did he, perched upon Eli's broad shoulders.

Mrs. Stone urged him to enter the house, and while Sammy filled his pockets with apples, and showed him his Maltese kitten and dancing-jack, she, by a few adroit questions, found out that one great cause of discouragement was the want of proper books; and when he arose to go she handed him a new slate and arithmetic, and also a reader and definition-book, at the same time extracting a promise that he would go with Sammy to Sunday-school on the next Lord's-day.

He looked at his clothes as he gave the promise, and Mrs. Stone did not much wonder at his hesitation, for patches of various hues and sizes disputed ground with sundry unmended rents, but she merely said, "Never mind the clothes, go to Sun-

day-school any way, for God judges by the heart, and not by outward apparel."

As Eli felt the apples in his pocket, a desire to divide them with lame Alice crept into his heart, and so he went round by the washer-woman's cottage. Alice was lying in her little cart, by the gate, watching the passers-by. Eli did not pause, but dropping several apples into the cart, he hurried away without waiting for her thanks, while she gazed after him with looks of delighted surprise.

The next Lord's-day Eli presented himself, according to promise, at the house of Mrs. Stone, and accompanied the children to Sunday-school. His appearance there created some surprise, but no offensive comments were made concerning his dress,

and he soon forgot every thing else, in his interest in the Bible-lesson; and having a natural talent for music, he was at once able to join in the singing.

Days and weeks rolled on, but brought no events to any of our young friends worth recording. The leaves faded at last, the bird-songs were hushed in the forest, and Winter, Monarch of the North, harnessed the winds to his cloud-chariot, and gathering his ermine mantle around him, swept toward the tropics, and breathing upon the landscape, in a single night, he turned the shrubs to marble monuments, and builded a bridge of purest crystal over roaring rivers and tiny rivulets, thus making a safe passage for St. Nicholas, with his load of Christmas-gifts.

Merry Christmas! how children's hearts bound at the thought! Still there are those



to whom its coming can hardly bring joy—those whom poverty's chill breath debars from all participation in its festivities. To this class belonged the washer-woman and her child. In their dreary cottage there was no preparations for a festival. Christmas had no meaning for

them, save that it ushered in long, dreary months of cold and storms, for which their scanty supply of clothing and fuel found them but illy prepared.

"Mamma," said Alice, who had been steadily gazing at the burning embers for a long time in perfect silence, "Mamma, why don't we have Christmas? Does God love us? Maria Munsell was here to-day, and told me all about her tree; and Mollie Stone and Sammy are going to have one too—why don't we have one?"

"We are too poor, my child—Christmas is for the rich."

"But why *aint* we rich? Mamma, you said I must go to Jesus with all my pains and trouble; I think if he knew how I wanted a Christmas-tree he would send it

to me!" and, clasping her hands tightly, Alice softly prayed: "O, dear, blessed Savior, please send mamma and me a Christmas, 'cause we're too poor to buy one of ourselves!" Then, with a smile of perfect trust, Alice closed her eyes, and was soon dreaming of the morrow.

Long did that patient mother gaze at her child, striving to devise some way to procure for her a Christmas-gift, but no practical plan presented itself, and she sighed, for her faith not being as strong as the little one's, she dreaded the disappointment which she thought the morrow must surely bring.

While Alice was talking, the door had been softly opened, and two brown eyes had looked into the room, but neither the

mother nor child had noticed the circumstance; and just as Alice's little prayer was ended the door was stealthily closed, and the brown eyes disappeared.

Eli—for it was he—walked slowly down the street. He did not enter the shoemaker's house, but passed on until he reached Mrs. Stone's. Sammy was at the window, and when he saw him he jumped down, and, opening the door, called to him to "*tum* in and see the *trismas*-tree."

Taking a seat near the fire, he placed Sammy on his lap, and then turning to Mrs. Stone told her all about Lame Alice and her evening prayer.

Sammy listened, and his loving, generous heart was touched at once; so, clambering down, he ran to the fire-place and

picked out all *his* apples, (and, as he claimed all the red ones, there was quite a quantity,) and piled them in Eli's hat, while his mother looked smilingly on, glad to see these evidences of generosity on the part of her boy.

Mollie, who had also listened to the story with deep attention, slipped from the room, and soon returned with her arms full of books and toys. A whole box of paper dolls and their wardrobes, the prettiest little music-box, and numberless other toys, which she prized highly, showed how earnest her feelings were.

It was decided that Alice should have a Christmas-tree, and Mrs. Stone sent the hired man with the evergreen; then packing a quantity of apples, cakes, pop-corn,

and candy in a basket, with Mollie's gifts, she handed it to Eli. Then turning to Sammy, she asked him if he could not spare his Maltese kitten to the lame girl who had so few sources of happiness.

"Will Malta make *trismas*?" he asked, hesitating; for the Maltese kitten was the most precious of all his pets.

"It would help," answered his mother, who knew that, hid away in the barn, puss had five more little "malts," just big enough to begin to play—a fact which she had been keeping for some time as a Christmas-surprise, and so she encouraged Sammy to give away his Malta, which he finally consented to do.

Together Mrs. Stone and Eli wended their way to the cottage of the washer-

woman, who was both surprised and delighted. Fixing the Christmas-tree where Alice would see it upon awakening, they loaded it with toys, put the little wicker-basket, containing "Malta," at the foot of the bed, and, as the clock had struck nine, bade the washer-woman good-night, and hastened home.

When Santa Claus went his rounds, you may be sure that Mollie and Sammy were not forgotten; but the snow lay so deep on the house-tops, and the wind roared so loud in the chimney, that they did not hear the tread of the reindeer-hoofs or the jingling of the Christmas-bells.

When the children awoke in the early morning, it was evident that some gener-

ous hand had been busy in their behalf. Such wonderful regiments of soldiers, such puzzles, and tops; such large balls, and bright skates as Sammy found in his stocking, are seldom seen; and I don't know as he would have stopped admiring them until this time if he had not caught sight of the five Malta kitts, curled down, fast asleep, in a bed of soft, white cotton. How bright their eyes were when they opened them, and how cunningly they chased each other around, falling and rolling over like animated pin-cushions! It took more arithmetic than Sammy was master of to tell in what ratio his gift to Alice had been multiplied to him.

Mollie found that, in addition to the beautiful books and toys which rendered

her stocking so plethoric, there was an elegant piano in the parlor, and beside it stood the Christmas-tree, covered with pretty things too numerous to mention.

Happy as were these favored children, their delight was nothing in comparison with that of Alice, who, when her eye fell upon the Christmas-tree at the foot of the bed, clasped her hands in an ecstasy of rapture, repeating again and again, "He heard me! He sent me a Christmas!" never for a moment doubting that it was the answer to her prayer—which indeed it was, though God had, in this instance, as he often does, used mortals as instruments to do his will.

The Maltese kitten, hearing Alice's voice, stretched herself, opened her eyes, and be-

gan to pur softly, which at once attracted the child's attention, and, clasping the little thing in her arms, she cried for very joy. Dear as were all other gifts, the kiten was dearer than all.

The washer-woman found, upon opening her door in the morning, that she, too, had been remembered, for a pile of wood, a barrel of flour, a fat turkey, and several bushels of apples had taken possession of the front yard and door-step.

Eli, too, had been remembered in an equally generous manner, and, when he opened his eyes in the morning, they rested upon a nice new trunk, with his name, in gilt, upon the lid. On opening it he found two suits of clothes, one for school, and the other for Sunday; a nice

Bible and hymn-book, a new cap, boots, mittens, socks, and a "comforter;" some handkerchiefs, towels, combs, and brushes, comprised the useful articles; and among the many little keepsakes there was one, a picture of himself, with Sammy on his shoulders. The likeness of both was perfect, and tears fell fast from his eyes as he gazed upon the picture. A few months had made a wonderful change in his feelings and surroundings. Then, he was friendless and unloved, while these precious gifts proved that he had now found true and lasting friends. From being one of the worst he had now become one of the best boys in the place. Such is the wonderful alchemy of love.

The change in Eli, being so great, had

its effect upon the shoemaker and his wife. First, they gave up drinking beer, and soon all quarreling ceased; and before another Christmas they had learned to love and obey the Savior.

Little Alice, too frail for earth, slowly faded away. Just before she died, her mother bent over her and asked if she was afraid?

“O, no, mamma, I’m not afraid—Jesus gave me one Christmas, you know, and it made me so happy. In Heaven it is always Christmas;” and, with a smile of faith, she closed her eyes, and the angels took her.

Eli Ross is now an aged man, and through his efforts many have learned the way of life more perfectly. But he has

never forgotten the trials of his youth; and to Sammy's gift of the red apple and expressions of love, and the faith of Alice, he attributes his first impulsive longings for that purer life upon which he entered by OBEDIENCE, and through which he hopes to reach that glorious home, promised to the faithful, and greet Sammy and Alice, with all the redeemed, on the shining shores of the River of Life.



The Merchant's Christmas Dream.



It was the night before Christmas. Mr. Allen's toy-store had been crowded all day, but at length the last purchaser had departed, and the weary merchant seated himself by the

stove to await the return of his errand-

boy, before closing the store for the night.

He rested his head upon the counter, and presently the store seemed filled with the buzz of many voices; but when he would have arisen to wait upon the newcomers he became spell-bound, as he saw that it was the various toys which had suddenly become endowed with life, and were holding an animated conversation.

The first words which he distinctly heard, came from the depths of a "Noah's Ark," which was standing close to his elbow upon the counter.

"O dear!" said little Mrs. Noah, as she tried to peer over a great polar bear which hid Mr. Noah completely from her view. "O, husband, I was so in hopes that sweet,

blue-eyed girl would take us away from this stifling atmosphere. Did you notice how nicely she arranged the ark, putting all the animals in first, then the birds, and, last of all, standing us upon our feet, close by the door, where we could, at least, get a breath of air, and have a chance to look out occasionally upon the world around?"

"Yes," said Mr. Noah, half out of breath from being crushed in between the zebra and rhinoceros, "I noticed her blue eyes and careful hand, but I also noticed her thin chintz dress, and I heard her sigh as the clerk told her the price of the ark, and she whispered to her little brother that she had not money enough, and I saw, too, the tears in her brother's eyes;

but just then that rude girl, with a pink hat and velvet cloak, came along, and such a fluster as she put me in; why, I came very near being trampled upon by the elephant, and I really thought, at one time, that the lion would make a meal of you."

Here, although Mr. and Mrs. Noah were still bewailing their sad fate, the merchant's attention was called to a large gray cat on the shelf just over his head.

"Mew, mew!" said puss, turning to a shaggy dog by her side. "How do you feel, Mr. Rover, after such a terrible day? As for me," she continued, without waiting for Rover to reply—"as for me, I am nearly worn out, and my throat is so sore I fear I shall die. See what I have been

doing all day;" and here puss opened her mouth, and, like a flash, a little mouse went down her throat. Rover laughed, while puss exclaimed, indignantly, "This way of eating mice is far from pleasant, I assure you, and I *did* hope that Santa Claus would take me in his pack and carry me to the home of little Hans—little Hans who used to live in Germany, in the same parish were I was born. I know he would shout for joy to see even a *cat* from fatherland."

"Bow, wow, wow!" said Rover; "why Tabby, you've forgotten all about your sore throat, or the question you asked, and your story is as long as the river Rhine, upon whose banks you were born. It's hardly polite to ask a question, and then

talk so fast that you give a person no chance to reply. However, I do n't mind telling you that I *do* think this has been a very trying day. You must know that I am from France, and that I attended the 'great Exposition,' and was very much admired for my bark—just hear me now—bow, wow, wow! Did you ever hear such a voice as that? Why, all Paris was delighted; but I have not received a word of praise to-day, except from a poor little newsboy, who cried because he had not money enough to purchase me for his little sick brother at home."

"Did you say that you were both from over the sea?" whispered a delicate little music-box, with a voice like a humming-bird. "Well, *I* am from Venice—beau-

tiful Venice!—and I know a dark-eyed Italian boy, lying upon straw in a gloomy garret, and oh, how I long, on this Christmas-eve, to go to him and cheer his heart with the melodies of his native land!”

“Ah,” sighed Miss Waxdoll, who had been silently listening to the conversation of her companions, “*you* have your trials, but my disappointment is greater than all. Every day since I was placed in the window a sweet, young girl has paused, morning and evening, to smile upon me and praise my beauty. Although she is only a music teacher, I have learned to love her, and she has been saving money to purchase me for a Christmas present for her little lame sister, who is so lonely when Jennie is away attending to her pupils.

To-day she came here with the money in her pocket, but some wicked person in the crowd succeeded in stealing her purse, and I am left at the mercy of strangers, instead of being, as I had hoped, the joy and pride of that dear, helpless child."

Just as the doll finished her story, a great stamping was heard outside, and Sambo, the "plantation dancer," who had done nothing all day but "touch the heel and touch the toe" for the amusement of the children in search of Christmas-gifts, called out:

"Look h-e-a, just keep quiet, you white folks, dar. Ole St. Nick's comin' for anoder load, sure; I hears the reindeer-hoofs—ha! ha!" and Sambo took the double-shuffle, to the tune of Jim Crow.

Instead of St. Nick, however, it proved to be only the errand-boy, who paused, very much surprised to find the merchant fast asleep in his chair, and the fire burned out, and the room cold. He was still more surprised when, upon touching Mr. Allen upon the shoulder, he started up, exclaiming, "O dear! is it you? I thought it was Santa Claus come to take those children their presents." Seeing the surprise depicted upon the boy's face, and comprehending the ludicrousness of such a speech from a sedate, middle-aged bachelor like himself, who had neither wife nor child to make glad by a Christmas gift, he laughed, and added, "I think I must have been dreaming. You may turn off the gas, and close up the store;" and with

these directions he slowly wended his way homeward.

Once there, and seated before the glowing anthracite, he fell to musing upon the strange scene, which had left a sad impression upon his mind. "If I had only finished the dream, and had seen St. Nick carry those things off," he soliloquized; "I believe *I* shall have to turn Santa Claus;" and no sooner had the thought entered his mind than all sadness and perplexity vanished. "The very thing," he continued, talking and nodding to the coal in the grate, which blazed, and sparkled, and snapped, as though trying to express approbation of the scheme.

* * * * *

"Merry Christmas! merry Christmas!"

shouted happy children, as they thronged the streets; and the bells chimed forth their gayest notes, and the sun looked down as though bent upon turning every snow-star into a diamond fit for an emperor's crown.

“I'll try and make this a '*merry Christmas*' to those poor little children of whom I dreamed,” said Mr. Allen, as he purchased an evergreen and ordered it sent home. Then pushing on, he entered the store and gathered together a basket of the most tempting of children's toys, not forgetting those which had played so conspicuous a part in his dream of the night before.

Next, he bade the housekeeper prepare for unexpected guests, while he procured

a pair of fleet horses and a warm, furlined sleigh, and went in search of the children he hoped to make happy by this unlooked-for Christmas party.

Perhaps you are ready to ask how the merchant expected to find these *particular children*, in a city so crowded with poor little boys and girls.

When he came to think about his dream, strange to say, he *knew* them all. The little blue-eyed girl, to whom Noah's wife took such a fancy, for her gentleness, was the orphan daughter of a soldier, who had once been his clerk, but died for his country, in the late war. Hans, the German boy, had often run errands when his clerks were busy; and the newsboy was faithful Henry Martin, who almost wholly

supported a widowed mother and an invalid brother. The Italian boy was one of those natural musicians who seem born to live beneath sunny skies, and whose souls are chilled by our cold clime. Jenny he remembered as a lovely girl, once the pet and pride of society, who, by the death of her father, had been left to a life of toil and poverty.

If I thought you cared to hear it, I might tell you that Jenny made such beautiful music upon Mr. Allen's grand piano that he prevailed upon her to give up teaching, and become the life and light of his lonely home, but I am sure you would much rather hear how the children enjoyed their Christmas dinner, than any wedding in the world.

You may rest assured that *they* thought the turkey the largest, and the plum-pudding the best that had ever been seen.

After dinner the parlors were opened, and there stood a Christmas-tree, resplendent with gifts for one and all. The Italian boy forgot to be home-sick as he listened to the music-box playing his own native airs; and when he learned that he was to fit himself for a teacher of music, and that his home was to be with a great professor from Italy, his joy was almost beyond bounds. The little newsboy received the shaggy dog, and, no doubt, Rover was satisfied, for he was never heard to mention the Paris Exposition, and the little invalid brother thinks his *bark* far

sweeter than music. Since puss was placed in the hands of the German boy, she has never once complained of sore throat, although his little sister keeps her swallowing mice many hours a day. Even Mrs. Noah seems content, for blue-eyed Mamie Dale always sets her on her feet close by Noah, and so near the door of the ark that she can see and hear all that is going on around her.

Need I add, that since Christmas-eve, the toys in the merchant's store have been as quiet and well-behaved as any toys in the city, and that happy homes have been provided for all these children?

Jenny's little lame sister has learned to love Mr. Allen, and will leave her doll, any time, to listen to the story of his

Christmas dream, from which so much happiness has resulted; but their "talk" always ends in Nettie's saying:

"But then, you know, you got my sister Jenny for *your* Christmas present, and I'm sure that's the best of all;" and as the ex-bachelor does not contradict the child's assertion, we may well suppose that he, too, thinks his present the best, and his dream the most fortunate that the patron saint of merry Christmas ever whispered in mortal ears.

But this is not the end, for, though happy and blessed in his home, Mr. Allen never fails to have a huge Christmas-tree, and invite large numbers of the poor and needy to enjoy the dinner which precedes the distribution of the presents; and,

happy himself in making others happy, his days are gliding peacefully by.

Over his desk at the counting-room is a frame inclosing the golden motto, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Mr. Allen has proved its truth. Reader, will you not "go and do likewise?"



Willie's Christmas Dream.

“**M**AMMA, I had such a beautiful dream,
And Willie's breath came quick—
I dreamed that Christmas-eve was here,
And with it old Saint Nick—
Just as I read in my picture book,
With his sleigh and his twelve rein-
deer,

And his funny pipe and well-filled pack,

And his face so round and queer.

And, O, Mamma, I saw him come

Adown the chimney there—

Light his pipe with a spark from the hearth,

And lay his cap in the chair;

And out of his pack, all running o'er,

There dropped such wonderful books,

And dolls, and dishes, and toys for me;

And he smiled with comical looks,

As he said, ‘for Willie I’ll leave them there,

He’s fast asleep as I see’—

But, Mamma, I was n’t fast asleep—

I only pretended to be.

I know, Mamma, it was all a dream,

But the beautiful presents *are* here;

And I’ve you to thank for them all, I see,

Instead of Saint Nick and his deer.”

"If Willie wishes to help Mamma,
We'll dub him Kris Krinkle to-day,
And send him with generous Christmas gifts
To the poor across the way,"

Said Willie's mother, while gathering up
Warm clothing, and food, and toys,
For the drunkard's wife in her lowly home
With her worse than orphaned boys.

"Open the door for old Saint Nick!

He is coming," sweet Willie cries;
Then they opened the door, and joyous tears
Fell fast from that mother's eyes.

Ah! old Saint Nick a wondrous saint

May be, for aught I know;
But I'd rather be the little boy

That trampled down the snow,
To carry a Christmas-gift to those
Poor children, and mother lone,

Than to have the name of a martyred saint,
Or sit a king on a throne;

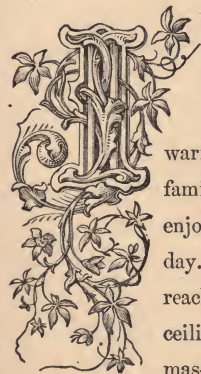
For lo! there cometh a night of death,
And a resurrection day;

And he who judges the nations then,
Shall unto the risen say:

"Whatever was done to the least of these
The same was done unto me;

Let the evil go into darksome night—
The good shall my glory see."

Mabel's Christmas-tree.



INSIDE that rich old mansion was a merry scene. In the warm, bright parlor, the family had gathered, to enjoy the Christmas holiday. At the further side, reaching from floor to ceiling, stood the Christmas-tree, covered with gifts, and brilliant in the light of its many-colored waxen tapers. The voices

of the children made joyous music, sweeter far than the sound of the lute, or the clear tinkling brooklet playing over its pebbly bed.

Grandpa Warren, dressed like a veritable St. Nicholas, with long white beard and flowing robes, distributed the gifts.

Little Minnie ran, delighted to show grandma her dancing doll, and Harry wound up his engine, and sent it whizzing, at railroad speed, over the carpet; but, as engines sometimes do, it met with an "*accident*," which threw it off the *track*. The "*accident*" in this case was puss, asleep on the rug, before the grate. When the mimic monster came rushing upon her, breaking her dreams, though happily not her bones, she sprang to her feet, and arched her back

with such a ludicrous display of fear, astonishment, and wrath, as to cause a shout of merriment from all, even old St. Nick himself joining in the fun.

Very different was the scene outside this fairy-like room. The wind howled, and the snow fell. Men, muffled in warm furs, hurried homeward. But one little figure wandered on, seemingly unmindful of the tempestuous wind or falling snow. A torn hood, from which a few stray curls escaped, a thin dress, and a well-worn shawl, could not protect the child from the bitter, biting cold.

But why was she abroad in the storm? Alas! she was one of those homeless orphans who wander up and down the earth, "seeking rest, but finding none."

Suddenly she paused before Judge Warren's mansion. The curtains had not fallen entirely across the window, and, standing there in the stormy night, the child looked upon the happy group around the Christmas-tree. As she gazed, an almost irresistible impulse seized her, and she placed her hand upon the bell; but she drew it quickly back, as she remembered how harshly the servants had spoken whenever she had ventured to ask for food that day.

But as she stood there, drawing herself up into the niche formed by the door-casing, to keep her shivering form from the blast, the footman opened the door and walked down to the gate with a friend, leaving the door ajar. She glided into

the hall, and no one saw her, until Judge Warren, looking up from his play with the children, beheld her, standing on the threshold, gazing around her like one in a dream. For a moment he was silent, from surprise; then an impulse to send her away rushed over him, but a voice—was it an angel's?—whispered, “She is one of Christ’s poor; accept her as *your* Christmas gift.”

To Mabel it did, indeed, seem like a fairy vision. But hungry, tired, and cold, the heat was too much for her, and she fainted, and would have fallen, but for Judge Warren’s strong arms, which caught and carried her to the sofa; and while he stroked her cold hands, and bathed her pale face, the children looked on, forget-

ting, for the time, their Christmas toys. At last her lips moved, and they heard her whisper, "I dreamed I was in Heaven!"

It was not *Heaven*, but henceforth, that next best thing, *home*, to Mabel; for the children, won by the sweet face and pleading eyes, begged to have her for a sister.

Later in the evening, refreshed by food, and neatly clad in some of Minnie's warm, bright garments, she was the center of an eager group, to whom she related the sad story of her soldier-father's death upon the battle-field, and a broken-hearted mother, who was sleeping under the snow. "She said she would come back for me, and I was waiting for her out in the

street!" and she looked toward the door as though she ought, perhaps, to still remain out in the storm, watching for her mother.

Tears were in the eyes of all the listeners, and the hearts of the children throbbed in sympathy. Suddenly Minnie, in all the innocence of childhood, exclaimed, "Let's give Mabel our Christmas tree!" And, with one accord, the children placed many of their gifts upon its branches, and, leading her up to the tree, said, "Santa Claus, this is our new Christmas-sister, and this is her *very own* Christmas-tree!"

When the angels went to Heaven that night, they bore a sweet story of a little

lamb, rescued from death, and of unnumbered blessings yet to fall, like ripened fruit, from the branches of little Mabel's first Christmas-tree.







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